



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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Smoke-Free Environments Are Best for Kids

Public Health Week in North Dakota Focuses on Healthy Communities and Healthy Children

BISMARCK, N.D. – In conjunction with Public Health Week, the North Dakota Department of Health is urging parents to ensure their children’s surroundings are smoke-free.

Gov. John Hoeven recently signed a proclamation declaring April 3 through 9, 2006, as Public Health Week in North Dakota. The focus of this year’s campaign is the impact of healthy communities on the health of children.

“Secondhand smoke is especially harmful to young children because they breathe in more air than adults and their bodies are still developing,” said State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D. “Exposure to secondhand smoke puts children at risk of severe respiratory diseases and can hinder the growth of their lungs. It’s important that parents and other caregivers keep their children away from secondhand smoke.”

Secondhand smoke is a known cause of the following:

- Low birth weight. Low birth weight contributes to the death of some infants and health complications into adulthood for others.
- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Maternal smoking is the strongest risk factor leading to SIDS.
- Cognitive impairments. Exposure to secondhand smoke negatively affects a child’s ability to learn.
- Respiratory problems. Secondhand smoke exposure increases the risk of respiratory infections such as bronchitis and pneumonia.

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- Asthma. Exposure to secondhand smoke causes more frequent and more severe asthma attacks in asthmatic children.
- Less healthy adults. Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke often grow up to be adults who experience poor lung function and respiratory disease. In addition, the more secondhand smoke a child is exposed to, the more likely he or she is of becoming a smoker as an adolescent or an adult.

Governor Hoeven's *Healthy North Dakota* initiative focuses on the importance of healthy living and healthy communities by challenging the state's citizens to take control of their health – to exercise more, to eat a healthy diet, to examine their use of tobacco and alcohol. The initiative provides the framework supporting North Dakotans in their efforts to make healthy choices by focusing on wellness and prevention anywhere people live, learn, work and play.

“As parents, we want to give our children the best start possible in life,” said First Lady Mikey Hoeven, spokesperson for *Healthy North Dakota*. “That includes making sure they aren't exposed to secondhand smoke. By making your home smoke-free, you are not only helping your children to grow up healthy and strong, but also helping to build a *Healthy North Dakota*.”

For more information about the effects of secondhand smoke, contact Kathleen Mangskau, director, Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control, at 701.328.4517. For more information about *Healthy North Dakota*, contact Melissa Olson, director, *Healthy North Dakota*, at 701.328.2372.

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